

Let's Talk About...

City Government 101

Based on the questions at City Hall and the comments made on social media, there appears to be confusion and misunderstandings about the functions, roles and responsibilities of City government. A good place to start understanding city government is to look at its structure.

The City of Hamilton operates under the Council-Manager form of government. This is a system of government that combines political leadership - the City Council - with professional management – the City Administrator.

The City Council is composed of five members and the mayor. All are elected at-large by registered voters in the City of Hamilton for staggered, two-year terms, which means half of the Council seats are up for election each year. Elections are normally conducted in May of each year. However, due to COVID-19, this year's elections were postponed until November 3, making the city elections coincide with the county elections (which were also postponed) and the national elections.

Two council positions and the mayor's position will be on the ballot November 3. Current council members Cody Morris and Justin Slone are running unopposed for re-election. Incumbent mayor Jim McInnis is running for re-election against John Courtney. The other three council positions, currently held by Shelley Voges, Todd Jordan and George Beard, will be on the ballot next May, barring any unforeseen circumstances.

The City Council meets at City Hall on the second Thursday of every month, with special meetings and public hearings scheduled as needed. Council members are responsible for setting the overall direction of the city, for adopting the annual budget, for entering into contracts, and for adopting ordinances, resolutions, policies and regulations to protect the city's current and future inhabitants. In return, Council members are paid \$25/month.

The City Council hires a City Administrator to oversee the town's daily operations. Historically, towns have found that overall costs are reduced with a full-time City Administrator to monitor operating costs, encourage increased productivity, and improve revenue collection. The current City Administrator is Ryan Polster, who was hired in March 2020.

Working closely with the City Council and the City Administrator, the City Secretary is responsible for the city's legal documents, including contracts, easements, liens, ordinances, and Council agendas and meeting minutes. The City Secretary is also responsible for conducting city elections. This position is filled by the City Administrator with the approval of the City Council. Misty Boatwright became the City Secretary in April 2020.

Hamilton has six departments staffed and overseen by the City Administrator: Public Works, Utility Billing, Finance, Code Enforcement & Permitting, Police, and Municipal Court.

With 10 employees, Public Works is the largest department and is responsible for the maintenance and improvement of Streets, Water, Wastewater (Sewer), Garbage (including the Bulk Waste Facility and the Burn Site), Parks (which includes Oakwood cemetery) and the Airport.

There is one employee each for Utility Billing and for Code Enforcement & Permitting. There is one part-time employee for Finance.

The Police Department, which includes Animal Control, protects the welfare and safety of Hamilton's residents within the city limits, dealing with everything from traffic accidents, city ordinance violations and dog-at-large complaints to drug rings and murder. The Class C Misdemeanors are filed through the Municipal Court, which has been administered for the last 16 years by Municipal Court Clerk Beccy Rowe. Municipal court cases are heard by Municipal Court Judge Randy Mills, who was reappointed earlier this year for another two-year term. All other offences are filed in Justice, County or District court.

At any time, there are approximately 20+ employees servicing the needs and desires of 3000+ residents.

This is the basic structure of our city government.